

But Deliver Us from Evil

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Summary: [Adult] Sequel to Home Fires. An immortal challenge changes lives forever.

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Comments: Third story in a story series, it follows "Home Fires"

Summary: An immortal challenge, leaves Duncan and Richie's lives changed, forever. Will their "family" survive?

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But Deliver Us From Evil . . . By Dawn Nyberg

Duncan was opening the car door before Adam could bring the car to a complete stop. "Wait! MacLeod" Adam called to the retreating figure.

"He has Richie! You know Logan, he's a sick bastard! He grabbed Richie to get to me, Adam. If he's been hurt . . ." Duncan was unable to finish his thought. It had only been five months since almost losing him to the gas explosion at the university pub. Logan had issued a challenge to Duncan, but wanted to have an incentive for the highlander so he grabbed Richie as he arrived home after his last final exam for Spring Qt. Home should have been safe, and Logan had intruded on that fact.

"You need to keep your wits, highlander" Adam spoke evenly. "We'll get the boy and you'll get Logan." Duncan nodded. Both immortals knew there approach would not be in secret the other immortal Logan Masterson would feel them coming.

"Let's go!" Duncan said as Adam nodded and followed along side the other man.

"Wonder when daddy, is gonna show up" Logan hissed as his hand cupped Richie's chin with force.

"Go to hell!" Richie spat back at him. "Mac, is gonna kick your ass! Then take your head."

"Oh, you think do you, little one." Logan bent his face close to the bound Richie. Logan hovered close to Richie's face. "You are a pretty one aren't you. It's no wonder the highlander keeps you around." Logan said evilly as his finger traced Richie's bottom lip for a second.

"Fuck you!" Richie screamed as he tried to bite Logan's lingering finger.

"You need to learn some manners!" Logan said as he grabbed a handful of Richie's hair and jerked his head back. Richie grimaced against the sudden movement forcing his neck back at an unnatural arch. Then suddenly Logan pulled the ropes free of the chair Richie had been bound to. He jerked him up swiftly, "You're just too good to pass up, little one" Logan said in a voice that suddenly filled Richie with sick fear not anger. And he began to struggle. "It's so much better if you don't fight it" Logan said as he pushed Richie down to his knees. The concrete floor of the back room off the basement was hard and hurt.

"Screw you, asshole!" Richie fought against the strength of the bigger man forcing him down. Logan grew tired of the fighting youth. He grabbed Richie's head and smacked it against the nearby wall as he struggled with him.

"There" Logan said flatly his voice cold. Richie struggled to remain conscious, but his surroundings were coming in and out of focus. Things were beginning to gray around the edges. But not quick enough . . . Logan grabbed Richie's shoulders and twisted him to face the wall and swiftly removed Richie's belt from his jeans. Richie remained non-combative still in and out of it from the blow to his head. Logan pushed Richie's jeans roughly down past his knees exposing him. Richie became aware enough to know what was about to happen, he weakly struggled against the man's attempts in vain. Logan suddenly reached around and grabbed Richie's groin. Without further preparation he forced himself into Richie, and drove his full length into the unprepared passage.

Richie couldn't stop the scream of agony that broke from his lips, the violence of the penetration slamming him into the wall and ripping the skin inside him. He felt his groin being squeezed. Richie fought to remain aware despite the pain. He began to struggle against each violent thrust from Logan as they slammed him into the wall. Logan had felt the arrival of an immortal, the quickening was powerful. He wanted to finish with the boy the highlander would wait. Duncan and Adam had heard the scream that sounded full of agony come from the basement.

"MacLeod" Adam whispered "Do not let your emotions cloud your actions, do what you came here to do."

"I know what I'm doing" Duncan hissed at Adam hurrying toward a light at the end of a hallway in the dark basement.

"Do you?" Adam grabbed Duncan's arm spinning him around.

"Yes!" Duncan said in a loud hissed whisper.

"You better, highlander. Just don't let your emotions rule you. Fight Logan. Win." Duncan pulled out of Adam's grip and started down the hallway.

Richie began to slip from consciousness, "Oh, not yet, little one" Logan hissed as he squeezed Richie's groin unmercifully. This brought the youth back from the inviting darkness and a moan issued from his lips. Richie felt the thrusts quicken, each one agony. Just as Logan felt his climax coming he stiffened against Richie thrusting deep and hard. The door burst open. Duncan stood not believing what his eyes were allowing him to see. Logan made eye contact, and withdrew from Richie allowing him to fall into a boneless unmoving heap on the floor. Richie's last dim feeling was the sensation of his own blood and Logan's semen trickling down his thighs, and the voice of Duncan screaming Logan's name. Adam stood there watching the scene and shot a look at Duncan.

"Kill the bastard!" Adam spat as he ran to the unmoving Richie. Duncan and Logan began circling each other.

"Not here" Duncan hissed from between clenched teeth as they continued to circle gauging each other. Logan smirked.

"By all means" Logan made a sweeping motion towards another door. Duncan eyed it suspiciously. Logan never turning his back on Duncan opened the door and started up the stair case, Duncan followed his katana held high in front of him. Soon they were outside behind the house and it was there the battle was joined.

Adam began assessing Richie's condition with the precision of a doctor, he had been one many times in his five thousand years. Richie had briefly opened his eyes and although confusion was in them he did recognize Adam and had whispered 'Mac' before slipping into unconsciousness yet again. Adam felt Richie's pulse it was rapid, and the kid was deathly pale. "Dammit, Richie!" Adam muttered "Don't do this" he knew the kid was going into severe traumatic shock. The bleeding had stopped and Adam had pulled the boy's underwear and pants back up. Even though this site wasn't something new to him it still sickened him. Richie's breathing had grown more shallow and his pulse irregular. Adam had covered the youth with a coat waiting for MacLeod's return, and if by some chance that bastard Logan survived, he would kill him just to watch him die, Adam idly thought to himself. His fingers were held in place on Richie's neck feeling his pulse as he listened to his shallow breathing. Then suddenly nothing  
. . .

Duncan moved methodically and thrust his blade in a flurry of controlled moves. Logan saw the glint of silver, the sheen of polished steel. He sidestepped, caught the blade on his own, trapped it and threw it back, knowing the highlander was slightly off balance, defending from instinct, not position or skill. Duncan's feet slid out and he cursed himself. Quickly, he raised his sword as he struggled to get legs under him, a knee. He might snag a shoulder with a downstroke, but he was too low, his center of gravity altered by a crouched position. He was too disadvantaged to do more than wound Logan, and he wanted the sick bastard dead. Logan ducked in

swiftly, adjusted his grip so he held the hilt of his blade as if it were a stake, he stabbed sharply downward and heard a chopped off grunt of pain.

"Got you" Logan said with amusement. Amusement short lived. Something snatched at the seam of his shirt, where the sleeve met the shoulder. Fabric tore aside, stripped away from his arm. Logan felt the sting of edged steel kiss the flesh of his arm. He jerked away, twisting, then shifted back instantly, adjusting his grip on the hilt once again. "I expected more from \*the\* Duncan MacLeod of the Clan MacLeod" Logan said smugly to Duncan. "Oh, I suppose when I'm done with you, I'll dispatch the other one. And as far as the boy goes, I do hate sloppy seconds, but he'll do, for awhile. He'll learn to like it, MacLeod" Logan sneered at Duncan. Duncan found his center then, fueled by a controlled rage, tonight he would send Logan Masterson to hell.

Duncan came up then, uncoiling, moving; had shed his coat so he was less encumbered. He flipped his katana neatly like a baseball bat, slicing side-armed but tucked, elbow leading, so that the hilt was foremost rather than the blade, and jammed the ivory dragon's head square into Logan's chest. Gone, was all the breath Logan had. Logan fell back, diaphragm briefly paralyzed. Logan rolled away grabbing his sword, breath was there if just out of reach. Logan lunged sloppily still hampered by the earlier blow. Blades met. Logan slid his blade down Duncan's the action causing sparks easily seen in the moonlight. Duncan turned dropping his blade under and over Logan's taking the advantage. Logan saw Duncan's face. Saw the eye's of the highlander. Saw in them rage and hatred unparalleled to any he had ever seen before. And he smiled. One final slash with all his strength and skill, committing everything unto him, screaming.

Duncan blocked it. Broke it.

Took him.

The quickening came then, sought Duncan out and found him. Nothing was worse than a quickening you didn't want in you. Not Logan's! Duncan didn't want the bastard in him, but there was nothing he could do, the bastard was his to kill, for Richie. \*God, Richie. I'm sorry.\* Duncan thought just as the full force of Logan's quickening over took him. He dropped his katana, fell to his knees on the grass. It warped his body, wracked him, sheathed his bones with living fire and knotted all his muscles. The quickening took every bit of him, every thought, and twisted, tested it. He managed one shout for Richie, for his sake. Richie's name roared out to the heavens, revenge and justice had been enacted on his behalf. Then Duncan could do nothing more than let it use him, let it dictate what and who he was. It hurled him back, smashed him down onto his back, left him there struggling to get up.

He cried out as Logan's memories filled him. Every moment of Richie's violation filled Duncan. He screamed against Logan's memories, trying to deny them, shaking his head as if to shake them from his mind. It was futile. He lurched to his knees. Felt the power run through him again, winding itself around his bones. It took him again, shook him, snapped him back, arched him back onto knees with arms outstretched, and released him. Duncan forced himself up, took in a shaking breath and not sparing a glance at Logan's lifeless corpse he grabbed his

sword and ran for the house.

Adam had been waging a battle of his own. Richie had gone into such severe shock, his heart had stopped. Adam refused to give up on the boy, if this death held him it would forever. A natural death. Compression after compression, forced in breath after breath and still nothing. Every time Adam checked for a pulse with his fingers he found only stillness under them. "Please! Richie. Live." Adam found himself feeling something he hadn't in a millennium or so, fear. Absolute fear. He felt the approach of an immortal, but was unwilling to stop working on Richie. Then he heard Duncan call out his name then Richie's. Moments later he burst into the room. Duncan's face drained of all it's color as he saw Adam bent over Richie doing compression's. He murmured to himself, "No."

"Here. Now! Duncan" Adam yelled at the highlander. Duncan broken from his momentary paralysis, rushing to them.

"Richie!" Duncan said as he quickly kneeled, across from Adam. He looked at Adam the old immortal had sweat on his forehead, he had been at this for awhile.

"Can you do this?" Adam barked.

"Yes" Duncan said as he watched Adam force air into Richie.

"Begin" Adam said raising up keeping a hand on Richie's forehead and looking at Duncan. Duncan began compression's. He began to count off.

"One-and-Two-and-Three-and Four..." finishing his set of compression's he looked at Adam, "Breathe." Adam bent and pushed air into Richie watching his chest rise and fall to the forced in air.

"Richie, Please." Duncan begged as he did compression's, "Don't leave me, come on toughguy!" Duncan and Adam kept up their fight.

"Stop compression's" Adam ordered as his hand searched for a pulse. Adams head shot up, "I feel a pulse" just then Richie took in a shuddering breath. "We got him back. Call an ambulance, Duncan. Now!" Adam threw his hand towards the door, "I'll watch out for him, Go!" Duncan looked at Richie and bolted from the room.

The nightmare was always the same. It never changed. It couldn't. Duncan knew that and it still made him wake in cold sweats, silently weeping for the innocence violated, a violation he felt responsible for. Richie had healed from his injuries. Two weeks in the hospital had helped the physical injuries but not the mental and emotional ones. The doctor at the hospital had encouraged Duncan to send Richie to a place for psychiatric treatment. He had flatly refused to send him away, he wanted his . . . his son near him. Duncan had called Sean Burns for help and he was willing to do what he could. Adam had called in some favors and had arranged for a private plane to take Duncan and the boy to France to see Sean and had also arranged for a secluded chateau for the highlander and Richie to stay at. The first month after the rape, Richie didn't speak, never uttered a word. He looked haunted and would wander from his room to the sun room in the chateau with the look of a someone shell-shocked. He didn't make eye-contact, and never really acknowledged the presence of anyone.

Richie wouldn't permit touch. He would wail at first and begin to moan and attempt to curl up in a ball if physical touch persisted. It terrified Duncan. Sean had been encouraging though and never wavered in his treatment of Richie. The nightmares had begun even in the hospital, causing them to sedate him to keep him under control. Now, the dreams still happened, but Sean never sedated Richie unless, his well-being was in immediate danger. Duncan hated not being able to comfort Richie with touch, he wanted to hold him. There were times it took Duncan's every strength to resist the urge and need to comfort the young man.

The second month at the chateau something changed one morning. Duncan awakened to the feeling he was being watched. He sat up, and immediately spotted Richie. The young man sat with his back against the far wall just beyond the french doors to Duncan's veranda, regarding Duncan with eyes that bore a host of emotions: Fear, confusion, pain.

"Richie?" Duncan said quietly not wanting to alarm him. This was the first time since that awful night over two months ago that Richie had acknowledged another person, and he had chose Duncan. Duncan approached Richie slowly trying to gauge the young man's state of mind. "Richie? It's Mac. Everything is okay. You're safe" Duncan stopped not far from Richie. The young man continued to regard him from the floor against the wall. Then his long silence was broken, Richie spoke.

"Mac?" his voice was quiet. Duncan smiled warmly at him.

"Yes. I'm here." Duncan didn't know if it was a good idea or not but reached out for Richie in a tentative gesture to embrace him. Suddenly, before he could react Richie propelled himself forward into Duncan's arms. Richie collapsed into the strong arms of the highlander, overcome with sobs that seemed to radiate from the deepest part of himself. Duncan just held him, occasionally murmuring reassurances into the boy's ear. Richie held onto Duncan with a strength that surprised the immortal. Duncan could feel the shaking as it grew more pronounced, he held Richie more firmly trying to stop the trembling.

"You're gonna be okay, toughguy" Duncan managed to say through a tight throat. Silent tears traced paths down his cheeks. Richie continued to tremble in his arms as he held him. Duncan shifted slightly and Richie dug his hands into Duncan's forearms. "I'm not going anywhere, Rich. It's okay" Duncan reassured sensing the young man's panic thinking Duncan was pulling away from him.

"Sorry" came out so quietly out of Richie but Duncan had heard it loud and clear.

"Sorry? What on earth for, Richie? You've done nothing wrong" Duncan said rubbing small circles on Richie's back with a comforting hand. Only silence continued that seemed to stretch on forever to the immortal then Richie spoke again.

"Not stop . . . not stopping him" Richie struggled with his words as he crumpled into a new wave of sobs. Duncan tightened his hold on the boy.

"Listen to me, Richie. It wasn't your fault. None of it was. Do you hear me! None of it. You did nothing wrong." Duncan tried to sound comforting, yet emphatic to the youth.

"Mac . . . he . . . he" Richie's shaking started again.

"Shh, Richie. You're safe. Shh" Duncan comforted.

A knock at the door and the sensation of an immortal brought Duncan's attention from the boy in his arms. "Yes, Who is it?"

"Duncan, it's Sean, Richie's missing from his room"

"Sean, he's in here. Come in" Duncan felt Richie tense slightly. "Shh . . . it's okay, Richie. It's Sean. You remember Sean don't you? He's been helping." Richie nodded slightly against the highlanders shoulder. Sean entered the room slowly and spotted Duncan on the floor holding Richie.

"Richie? It's Sean. May I talk to you?" the immortal psychiatrist asked with an even tone. Richie lifted his face from Duncan's chest and looked at Sean. Richie had never really looked at the man before, but his mind recognized the voice. He nodded to him in acceptance. Sean smiled warmly at him. "Good. Would you like to come to the sun room with me?" Richie seemed to panic slightly and tightened his grip on Duncan, his eyes widening. Duncan looked at Sean with questioning eyes on how to handle this. "Richie, would you like Duncan to come with us? And maybe if you feel comfortable, you could talk to me alone." Richie looked at him and the doctor could see in the young eyes he was thinking about it. Richie nodded. "Good. Shall we?" Sean said motioning to the door. Duncan helped Richie to his feet and walked with a protective arm around the young shoulders to the sun room.

After an intensive four weeks of sessions every day but weekends, unless something happened that called for one, Richie seemed to be pulling out of his withdrawn state. He still had a long way to go, and Duncan knew it, but it was a start. Joe and Adam hadn't been to visit, but had been in contact with Duncan always asking how Richie was doing. Sean had thought it best that neither Joe or Adam came to France to visit, 'Too much stimulus' the doctor had said to MacLeod, and Duncan had agreed. He wanted no set backs in Richie's recovery. Duncan had been talking with Sean as well the doctor feeling it was a good idea. Duncan could now see the wisdom in Sean's actions, the nightmares still happened, but not as often, and Duncan had begun to accept it wasn't his fault. Sean had also helped Duncan come to grips with the integration of Logan's quickening.

"How is he doing?" Duncan asked as he saw Richie head for his room and shut the door after finishing a session with Sean in the sun room.

"It'll be a long road, Duncan" the doctor said looking towards the closed door of the young man's room. "Can we talk?" he said motioning them down stairs to the library.

"Sure" Duncan said examining Sean's face. "Is he okay? Sean?" his voice showing concern. Sean smiled and laid a comforting hand on Duncan's shoulder.

"Relax, Duncan. I want to discuss some things, you needn't get overly concerned.

"There's a 'but' in there some where, isn't there? What's wrong?" Duncan said walking down the staircase towards the library. Sean merely smiled warmly and guided Duncan towards their destination with a patient hand. Duncan sat listening to Sean and was having trouble getting his mind around what he was hearing, 'Richie suicidal' surely Sean was wrong, but that was what he was hearing from the other immortal. "Sean, you don't know Richie. He would never kill himself" Duncan said emphatically to his friend.

"Perhaps, having some distance from the situation Duncan allows me an unbiased opinion. I'm sure the old Richie you remember, wouldn't ever think of suicide, but things are different now, and so is he" Sean said sitting down across from Duncan. Sean went on to explain to Duncan everything that has led him to believe that Richie may want to die. Duncan sat, listening.

"He really said he wished he had died from the shock after the attack?" Duncan said in disbelief.

"Yes, Duncan. He told me he wished you and your friend Adam hadn't been able to bring him back. He said 'he should have died' " Sean said watching Duncan's face.

"God, How could he ever wish that? I need to talk to him" Duncan began to rise. Sean stopped him with a hand on his forearm.

"Wait, Duncan. You should have an approach to this with him" Sean encouraged. "He is still very fragile, just because four weeks have passed since he began to communicate, a little, and I stress little. I've told you he often just listens to me talk and responds when I urge him to or he feels like it."

"I can handle it, Sean. I have to talk to him" Duncan said pleading with his eyes. Sean knew Duncan would be gentle with his words.

"All right, but if you need me, yell. Okay?" Sean said patting Duncan on the back.

"I may take you up on that offer, keep your ears open." Duncan said smiling at his long time friend and he left.

The next few moments of Duncan's life would be forever embedded in his memory, banished to the realm of a nightmare. Duncan reached the top of the stairs and knocked softly on Richie's door. "Richie? It's Mac, can I come in?" There was no response. He knocked again. "Rich?" Duncan tried the door and found it locked. Something in his gut twisted all of a sudden and fear overtook the highlander. He pounded on the door, now yelling Richie's name. Sean called from the bottom of the stairs for Duncan.

"What's wrong, Duncan" Sean asked his voice filled with concern as he climbed the stairs toward Duncan's yelling.

"It's Richie, he won't answer me and the damn door is locked" Duncan said trying to shoulder the door open. "Richie!" Duncan was trying to break the heavy door in. Finally it gave. Duncan had to push with



some effort, Richie had moved a bureau over blocking the door. "Damn it!" Duncan muttered as the bureau moved. Duncan's eyes saw him first, then Sean did.

"Richie! God, No!" Duncan ran for the young man, hanging from a sheet attached to the open beamed ceiling, a chair lay on it's side. Duncan ran for Richie, and lifted him up taking the pressure off of his neck, while Sean ran into the room with his sword cutting through the sheet. Richie was deathly pale, his lips a bluish - purple, he was limp and lifeless. Duncan lowered Richie to the floor. Duncan pulled the sheet away from Richie's neck. Duncan felt for a pulse with a shaking hand. Sean examined Richie's neck for any strange curves.

"His neck didn't break" Sean said in a clinical voice.

"He has a pulse!" Duncan yelled in a near panic. "Dammit! Richie. Don't you do this. Don't you die on me" Duncan pleaded.

"He's not breathing, Duncan." Sean said trying to make Duncan focus. Duncan wouldn't let Sean help, he took over the rescue breathing for Richie. Two minutes later, Richie gasped in air and Duncan watched his face take on some color as his lips began to pink up a little bit. The boy remained unconscious. Sean examined him and had made the decision that Richie didn't need to go to the hospital, after all he was a medical doctor, he could care for the young man here at the house. Duncan refused to leave Richie's room and Sean had thought it a good idea for awhile at least that the boy not be left alone. Duncan sat watching Richie's chest rise and fall evenly, not believing that he could now associate Richie with a phrase like 'suicide watch.' Duncan would not lose Richie, he would help him to find his way out of the darkness he was in because of Logan Masterson. Duncan sat studying the young man, he sensed Sean nearby and turned to look for him.

"What are these?" Duncan asked in a hushed whisper to Sean. Sean followed Duncan's gentle finger as it traced tiny red dot's around Richie's eyes. "And there are some here as well" Duncan noted looking at Richie's bruised neck.

"Hemorrhages, Duncan. They are caused from the stoppage of blood flow. They will heal in a few days," Sean reassured "but the neck bruises will take longer" Sean said as he gently examined Richie, once again.

"Why is he still unconscious, Sean?" Duncan asked quietly as he continued to watch the youth.

"Don't worry, Duncan. His respiration's are good and his blood pressure is fine. Just let his body regroup a bit and he'll wake up" Sean said with a smile. "I'll leave you alone with him, call me when he wakes."

"I will" Duncan assured.

Richie began to stir around dusk and Duncan sat forward in his chair as the young man opened his eyes. "Richie?" Duncan asked his voice gentle but worried. Richie's eyes fluttered open and focused on the ceiling above him. "Richie?" Duncan said again. This time Richie's eyes darted to Duncan.

"Why?" he managed as he winced against the pain the short word produced in his throat.

"Why, what?" Duncan said trying to give Richie a glass of ice water to soothe his throat he turned away from the offer and Duncan sat the glass down. "Why, What, Richie?" Duncan asked again. Richie shot a look at the highlander. Duncan had never seen this look in those young eyes before, they were anger filled but something else just under the surface. Hate? Duncan wondered.

"Why, Mac? Why didn't you let me die? I want to die" Richie said as he sat up in the bed.

"Don't say that, Richie" Duncan tried to quell the anger he was feeling at the statement. Richie's eyes filled with anger, he acted as if he had been betrayed by being saved.

"I want to die!" Richie spat out "You can't stop me! Let me die!"

Duncan couldn't control the anger anymore, "Don't you say that! I don't want to hear that out of your mouth again. Do you understand me?!" Duncan bellowed.

Sean had heard the commotion and came into the room. Richie had gotten to his feet now and Duncan had placed himself in the escape route for the door. Duncan turned slightly to acknowledge Sean's entrance. "Easy Duncan" Sean coaxed. "Richie, you should be lying down" Sean said looking at the boy.

"Up yours! Tell Mac, to get the hell out of my way" Richie yelled.

"I can't do that, Richie. Duncan is only trying to keep you safe" Sean said in an even tone.

"Safe! I don't need safe. I want . . . I want . . ." Richie's mind was going a thousand miles per hour.

"You want what, Richie?" Sean asked. Richie looked at Sean his eyes filled with fire and then he cast a look at Duncan.

"I want to die! You can't stop me!" Richie backed up toward the tall dressing mirror, his hand reaching out for a tiny metal box that sat on the nearby dresser. Before Duncan or Sean could react, Richie broke the large mirror and grabbed a large glass shard. "You can't stop me!" Richie placed the glass length wise on his arm as if to cut straight up not sideways. Richie caught the look of alarm on Duncan's face. "Didn't think I knew the right way, huh?"

"Richie! Please, don't" Duncan pleaded while he tried to figure out what to do. Duncan knew however, if Richie did slice his wrist open, there would still be time. That thought was quickly thrown out. Richie eyed the two immortals and smirked at them as a new idea blossomed.

"Quicker this way, though" Richie hissed out as he brought the glass shard to his neck.

"Richie!" Sean called out, drawing the attention of the youth, it was enough. Duncan leaped forward knocking Richie to the floor and taking control of the glass.

"Nooooo! Let me die, Mac. Please, God let me die!" he wailed. Sean was now over the pinned down young man.

"Hold him, Duncan" Sean said in an urgent tone as he inserted a hypodermic needle into his flesh, "Just a pinch, Richie" Sean said as he injected the contents of the needle into his arm.

"Go to hell" Richie said a mere whisper as his eyes slid shut and his body relaxed against Duncan's death grip. Duncan wiped impatiently at the tears that were now streaking his cheeks. He pulled himself off of Richie and released his grip when Sean had assured him the sedation had taken full effect.

"He'll sleep the rest of the night, Duncan" Sean said as he lended a hand to Duncan as he got to his feet. "He didn't hurt himself, only some minor nicks in his hand, nothing serious" he said as he examined Richie. Duncan bent down and lifted Richie up and put him in the bed.

"Sean, that was too damned close" Duncan said as he took a deep breath finally allowing his blood pressure and heart rate to drop. "What are we gonna do, Sean? I canna lose him, he's all I've got" Duncan's scottish brogue was thick his emotions coming through.

"You won't lose him, Duncan. Come, let us clean this mess up. First things, first" Sean said clasping a hand over one of Duncan's shoulders. Duncan looked over at Richie. "He'll sleep, Duncan. He won't wake for hours" Sean reassured the highlander of Richie's safety. Duncan nodded and began to help clean the mess of broken glass off the floor. Duncan and Sean had finished cleaning the room and removing various items that Sean thought possible threats. Duncan sat watch over Richie while Sean had excused himself for a few minutes, he sensed the immortals return and looked for him.

"What are those?" Duncan asked eyeing what Sean had in his arms.

"Necessary evils, Duncan. They are arm and leg restraints" Sean said his voice calm.

"Isn't there another way, Sean. Please, he'll hate these things" Duncan said with pleading eyes.

"Duncan, I wish there was another way, but there isn't. Do you want a repeat of earlier?" Duncan shook his head as his eyes studied the sedated Richie " I didn't think so" Sean added as he saw Duncan shake his head. "Can you help me with them?"

"Yes" Duncan answered following Sean's lead as what to do. Ten minutes later the restraints were in place. Padded leather restraints were around Richie's wrists and ankles, held in place by the metal bed frame.

"There" Sean said as he checked the last one "He can move them a little, but not enough to thrash around fighting them to hurt

himself." Duncan looked at the stand-by of medication near the bed.

"Will that be necessary?" Duncan questioned.

"I'll try to keep from sedating him as much as possible, Duncan" Sean said looking from the highlander back to the unconscious young man "but it may be needed" he continued. Duncan nodded knowing it was the truth. "Duncan, it may become necessary to start him on an IV" Duncan's eyes filled with fear.

"Why?! What's wrong?" his voice raised in alarm.

"Calm down, Duncan. I expect he will refuse food next. Especially now with the restraints in place" Sean said in a matter of fact tone.

"Do what you have to" Duncan said with finality "I just want him to be okay."

"I know, Duncan" Sean said patting a shoulder " I'll have the supplies ordered from the local hospital and delivered so that I'll have them on hand."

"I'll stay with him" Duncan said letting a hand push back a few errant curls from Richie's forehead.

"Fine. I'll be within ear shot" Sean said before leaving. Duncan nodded.

Richie did sleep the rest of the night and Duncan never left his side. Sean came in a few times during the night to check Richie's vitals. Duncan would watch with anxious eyes. "He's all right, Duncan. Relax. This is just procedure, he is fine" the doctor would reassure. Richie began to become aware of a bed beneath him, he was dimly cognizant of movement about the room but his eyes stayed closed. Finally, his eyes began to open slowly, he moved slightly and as he began to raise his hand to rub his face he quickly realized he couldn't move his arms up. Richie's eyes shot open and he soon found out his legs were restrained at the ankles as well. He began to fight the restraints.

"Rich! Stop it. Calm down" Duncan ordered in a stern voice

"Get me out of these things!" Richie yelled.

"Richie . . ." Duncan began only to be cut off.

"Don't Richie, me. I want these damn things off. Now!" Richie ordered as he pulled against the hold of the restraints.

"Richie, don't you'll hurt yourself" Duncan tried to calm him, but he had expected this reaction.

"Good!" Richie spat out as he pulled against them violently.

"Richard, I'll have none of that" Sean spoke from behind Duncan as he entered the room. "Now, when you decide to calm down, we'll talk."

"Talk? I've got nothin' to say. You can't keep me tied up like this" Richie said belligerently as he tried to fight against the restraints on his legs.

"Well, Richard, I can keep you like this as long as I have to, in order to insure your safety" Sean said in a well manicured doctor's voice.

"Stop calling me Richard, it's Richie!"

Duncan didn't know what to say so he just listened to Sean.

"Fine. Richie." Sean answered. Richie seemed to settle for a moment as his eyes panned around the room.

"I gotta piss" Richie said under his breath not making eye contact with Sean or Duncan.

"Richie, watch your mouth" Duncan said coloring slightly not so much at the language, lord knows he had heard worse out of the kid, but being so blatant with the request in front of Sean was another story.

"Screw you, Mac! You're not my father" Richie hissed then he suddenly looked away from the highlander as he saw the hurt the last part of his statement caused fill Duncan's eyes and face. A few moments later, Richie looked back for Duncan and only found Sean. Duncan had left the room. Richie tried to look impassive at Duncan's absence, but Sean had seen the look that flashed across the young man's eyes when he saw Duncan had gone. "I really need to go" Richie said in a low voice looking away, flustered that he had to ask to use the restroom.

"All right, Richie. Don't make me regret this" Sean said as he started with the leg restraints first. Sean saw no aggression in the boy and went ahead and removed the wrist restraints. Richie started to rise to head for the bathroom. "Richie, leave the door cracked, please" Sean said keeping his voice even and non-threatening.

"Whatever" Richie replied his need to relieve himself stronger than his need to rebel for the moment. A minute or two later he emerged from the bathroom. Sean stood looking at him, "What now?" Richie quipped.

"Well, if you can demonstrate to me you can be trusted, I won't use the restraints again" Sean spoke with a matter of fact tone.

"Where is everything?" Richie asked noticing the room was missing some items.

"Well, I thought it best to remove a few things to safeguard you a little" Sean spoke calmly.

"Uh, huh" Richie muttered noticing the two chairs in the room were gone, the dresser he had used to block the door was gone as well, the mirror and broken glass was cleaned up and removed. Even the mirror in the bathroom was gone. One dresser remained but it was a heavy antique mahogany wood french dresser that probably weighed more than

all three of the men. Richie figured that was why it was left, it wasn't a threat.

"Are you hungry?" Sean inquired.

"No" Richie said flatly.

"You have to eat, Richie"

"No, I don't" Richie thought he had found another way, he could refuse to eat. Sean smiled inwardly at himself he had anticipated this but he showed no emotion or amusement to Richie.

"Okay, you have two options, Richie" Sean countered back "One, you can eat on your own, Two, I can sedate you and put you on an IV and feed you that way, but you will eat. Now, those are your choices. Which is it?" Richie's face reddened he hated this. "Well?" prompted Sean.

"Fine. Whatever. I just want a sandwich or something" Richie huffed knowing Sean wasn't kidding about the IV.

"Good. It'll be ready soon" Sean said exiting the room and closing the door. Richie heard the door lock behind Sean. He sat down heavily on the bed, feeling a mixture of feelings. He wondered if Duncan was okay, he hadn't meant to hurt him. \*'Mac's the best thing to ever happen to me' \* Richie thought to himself.

"What are you doing?" Duncan asked as Sean entered the kitchen where he had been hiding out.

"Fixing Richie something to eat"

"He's eating?" Duncan said his hopes rising.

"Well, I let him choose, an IV or eat. Eating won out" Sean said smiling. "You know he didn't mean to hurt you, Duncan" Sean said looking at the highlander. "He's angry at the world and himself, not you."

"I'm not sure about that, Sean" Duncan said his tone unsure.

"Here" Sean said finishing the loose meat sandwich for Richie, "Take it to him."

Duncan almost laughed, "He'll only throw it in my face, Sean"

"Just try, Duncan. He needs you as much as you need him" Sean said shoving the food and Duncan in the direction of the stairs.

"Is he still restrained? He'll never let me feed him"

"No. I removed them, he's locked in his room"

What?! You left him alone." Duncan almost bellowed but kept his tone in check.

"Yes, Duncan he's alone. Have some faith in my judgment, would I put Richie in danger?" Sean said looking Duncan straight in the face.

"No" Duncan said chagrined, "I'm sorry"

"It's okay. Now, go" Sean insisted as he handed Duncan a key to the room. Duncan went up the stairs and walking toward Richie's bedroom door his stomach was fluttering, he shook his head at himself thinking, \*'why am I nervous to see him?' \* Duncan put the key in the door unlocking it, he tucked the key back into his jeans and decided to knock before slowly opening it. He walked in and found Richie sitting on the bed looking out the window, he never turned around to see who had come in when he spoke.

"Just put it on the bed, I'll get to it" his voice sounded deflated. Duncan watched him a second longer and decided to speak.

"Richie . . ." he began tentatively. Richie's head shot over to the familiar voice he hadn't expected to hear.

"Mac?" he said not succeeding at keeping the relief out of his voice at the presence of the highlander.

"Yeah, it's me" Duncan replied glad at the trace of relief to the boy's voice. Maybe there was hope yet to preserve his little family. "Can I join you?" his voice trembled a bit when he asked the question. Richie had picked up on that little fact and eyed the highlander with curious eyes. Richie wanted to tell him to go away but couldn't bring himself to do it, suddenly.

"Whatever, if you want to" his voice was soft and scared which totally did away with the harsh, unfeeling statement. Duncan smiled to himself making sure Richie didn't notice.

"Don't mind if I do" Duncan said "Do you mind?" he asked motioning to the bed as a place for him to sit. Richie shook his head and Duncan sat on the foot of the bed. "Here, Sean made it" Duncan said pushing the plate over to Richie. Richie took it and he did eat. Despite trying to deny his hunger he ate it all. Duncan was pleased with that. The silence between them seem to stretch on forever. Duncan decided he needed to break it. "Richie, I would like to talk to you."

"You are" Richie quipped. Duncan rolled his eyes slightly, Richie was trying to push his buttons.

"Rich" Duncan said taking a breath, he wouldn't let Richie manipulate him. Richie looked up at Duncan, his attention achieved by Duncan's tone.

"Mac, there is no point to talking" Richie said idly.

"There is a point, Richie. Your life is the point" Duncan was blunt. Richie looked at him now, his blue eyes haunted and Duncan fought the urge to reach out to the young man in front of him.

"Get real, Mac! My life isn't worth shit" Richie said raising from the bed to stand at the window gazing at the gardens below. Before Duncan could say another word, Richie spoke again "I'm pathetic, and you know it" his hands squeezing the decorative french wrought iron bars that covered his window.

"No, you're not" Duncan voice was forceful.

"Don't Mac, I make you sick, just say it" Richie's knuckles were white as he held onto the bars, he never looked at Duncan.

"Stop it, Richie! Are you in my head? Huh? Are you?! You know what I'm thinking, what I'm feeling!" Duncan put a hand on Richie's shoulder turning him to face him. Richie flinched away from his grasp and Duncan pulled back. "You didn't answer my question. Do you know what I'm thinking?" he said his voice gruff giving way to the emotions he was feeling. He wouldn't lose Richie to the darkness that wanted him, he wouldn't lose his . . . his son. He would fight to bring Richie out of the dark place his soul had been trapped in.

"No" the reply had come so unexpectedly and so quiet Duncan wasn't sure he had heard it from Richie.

"Care to repeat that?" Duncan inquired.

"No . . . I don't know what you're thinking" Richie said his voice stronger now, defiant.

"Thought so" Duncan said flatly. "Now, how could you possibly ever think you make me sick?" Richie felt his heart begin to speed up, he felt a tremble come over his body. Duncan had seen it but resisted saying anything.

"Because I let him, I couldn't stop him" Richie said quietly not looking at the immortal. Duncan looked at Richie in confused, amazement.

"Oh, Richie. It wasn't your fault. Logan, he . . . he raped you. It wasn't your fault. I don't blame you" he paused " I blame myself" Duncan's eyes burned with unshed tears. Richie shot a confused, stunned look at the highlander.

"You blame yourself? Why?" Richie said before he could stop himself.

"Being who I am, Richie. Immortal. I brought this on you and I'm so sorry. Richie, you didn't let Logan do anything, he did what he wanted to, and there was nothing you could do. I don't blame you if you hate me" Duncan said turning away from Richie as the tears threatened to spill down his cheeks. Richie couldn't believe what he was hearing.

"Mac, I don't blame you. I never did" Richie said to the highlanders back. "Mac, look at me" his voice was soft with an encouraging tone. Duncan only shook his head, he couldn't face him, not now. "Mac?" Richie walked to him now. He reached out a hand and hesitantly placed it on the immortal's shoulder. "It wasn't your fault, Mac" Richie reassured. Duncan didn't feel he deserved the absolution from Richie. Before he could stop himself the tears came now in wracking sobs that came in powerful waves. Duncan's legs buckled beneath him. He knelt on his knee's his face in his hands.

"No! My fault. All my fault. I'm so sorry!" Duncan said between sobs.



"No! Mac. It's not. Mine either" Richie said kneeling now next to the crumpled immortal, rubbing comforting circles on his back. Richie had for the first time recognized where the blame lie, with Logan Masterson. It was with that realization that Richie knew Duncan's hidden torment, he had taken Logan's quickening, he thought to himself, \*' God, Mac! You took that bastard into you, for me. I'm sorry, I'm so sorry.' \* Richie pulled his hand away from Duncan a feeling of sickness coming over him, he ran for the bathroom slamming the door. He made it just in time to empty the contents of his stomach into the toilet. Duncan had climbed to his feet, running for the bathroom door. He tried the door expecting it to be locked, it wasn't. He burst in and saw Richie vomiting and quickly went to him.

"Richie! Are you okay?" Duncan said with concern heavy in his tone. Richie didn't answer he was too concerned with his heaving stomach to pay attention. "Richie, please! What's wrong?" Duncan pleaded now. Richie was finally able to pull away from the toilet and collapsed back against the porcelain tub. Duncan wet a cloth and rubbed it over Richie's face. Richie closed his eyes, the coolness felt good.

"I'm okay, Mac" the admission seemed to comfort Duncan and Richie was happy for that. "I'm sorry, Mac" Richie said his voice heavy with something. Duncan continued to rub Richie's face.

"Sorry for what, Richie? You have nothing to apologize for" Duncan said his voice urging Richie to say more.

"For having to take his quickening, Mac. You shouldn't of had to" Richie said flatly.

"Richie, listen to me. What Logan did was unforgivable and it's my responsibility to protect my family. Protect you." Duncan took Richie's face in his hands, " I'm not sorry for killing him, I'd do it a thousand times over if I had to. I . . . I love you, Richie" Duncan paused, "You're my family, the only one I've got. I can't lose you. I want you to live, Richie" Duncan said with silent tears falling down his cheeks. In that moment, Richie wanted more than anything to live, and he knew now the fear that he had put Duncan through.

"Sorry for scaring you, Mac" Richie said his bottom lip beginning to quiver against the onslaught of emotions beginning to flood through him.

"Shh, it's okay, toughguy" he soothed seeing the battle raging across the young face in his hands.

"I-I d-don't want to die" the admission came out as his face crumpled into a sob. Duncan pulled him close and held him.

"It's okay, it's gonna be all right, Richie. Shh. . ." Duncan spoke softly trying to quiet him and give some comfort.

One week turned into three and soon a couple more months had past since that momentous day in the bathroom. Richie had been opening up to Sean in his daily sessions and his eyes were beginning to show life again. Duncan was proud of the inner strength he always knew Richie had. Duncan knew the afternoon session with Sean had ended because he heard the other immortal in the library on the phone. He

went up to Richie's room and found it empty, he frowned. The sun room was empty as well. "Where the hell is he?" Duncan muttered to himself as he continued to look. He went back to Richie's bedroom again, this time he looked out the open window through the bars. Richie was sitting in the flower garden. Duncan left the room his destination the garden.

Richie had his eyes closed, his face toward the sun letting the warmth soak into him. It was a cool crisp October day, but the sun felt good. Duncan approached him carefully not wanting to startle him. He cleared his voice a few feet away. Richie opened his eyes and looked at Duncan. "Hey, Mac" Richie said as a smile spread across his face. Duncan took a seat next to the young man.

"How ya doin'? The session go okay?" Duncan asked.

"I'm good. Yeah, the session went fine. I like Sean." Richie answered.

"I'm glad you do. He speaks fondly of you" Duncan smiled. Richie looked much better these days, healthier, happy, not so haunted. Richie had celebrated his twenty-first birthday here at the chateau. Joe and Adam had sent a gift via courier with a note signed by both for the special day, but had stayed away still letting Richie have his time alone. Things seemed to be getting back to normal, although, Duncan knew things would always be different and Richie would never forget what happened to him. Duncan knew now that Richie had learned through talking to Sean that he could live with it. He had also learned to laugh again. A sound Duncan had come to miss a great deal.

"Mac?"

"Yeah?"

"When we goin' home?" Richie looked at Duncan.

"You gettin' home sick?" Duncan asked

"I don't know. I mean Thanksgiving isn't far off and Christmas is just around the corner. I'd kinda like to be home for those days, ya know?"

"Yeah, I do. I'll talk to Sean. I'll make a deal with you if he says it's okay, we'll go, but if he thinks you two need more time, we'll stay" Duncan said smiling warmly at Richie.

"Deal!" Richie said his face lighting up.

Duncan had spoken to Sean and he had agreed that Richie was ready to go home. But he encouraged them both to not hesitate in calling him if either needed to talk and he passed along the name of a 'old' friend near Seacouver that was a licensed therapist. Of course, usage of 'old' had alerted Duncan to the fact it was an immortal.

"I trust her, Duncan" Sean said handing him the number, "She's very good!"

"Thanks, Sean. Thanks for everything!" Duncan pulled Sean into a quick hug.

"You're welcome, Duncan" Sean paused as Richie entered the room, "and as for you young man, I'll miss you" Sean said with a smile.

"Thanks, Sean!" Richie said his cheeks coloring slightly, "Thanks for everything" the unspoken secrets of what Richie had verbalized to him over the past months still between them.

"Don't thank me, Richie. I'm glad I could help"

"You did" and that was all the thanks Sean really needed to hear from the young man.

Duncan had placed a call home alerting Joe and Adam to their impending arrival. Joe and Adam had been keeping an eye on the house while Duncan had been gone. They had picked up the mail about three times a week and making sure all was well. They had volunteered to stock the kitchen before their return and freshen the house up since it had been closed up for a few months. Duncan had thanked them and went to the front door to answer the bell. It was the caretaker of the house coming to get the keys as they departed. A car horn sounded as well and Duncan spotted a taxi, he waved at the driver and called out, "Just a minute" the driver nodded and exited the car to open the trunk for the luggage sure to come. They all left at the same time. Both Richie and Duncan walked Sean to his car out front. "Have a safe trip back home, my friend" Duncan said extending a hand to the immortal.

"I will. Keep in touch" Sean said grasping the offered hand.

"We will" Duncan assured and Richie extended a hand to the doctor as well.

"Bye, Sean" Richie said with a smile.

"Good-bye, Richie. Take care of yourself" Sean spoke with a gentle voice and warm smile.

"I will" Richie said with a smile.

The taxi came into Paris and Richie wanted to make a stop. "Mac?"

"Yes?"

"Could we stop by the church?"

Duncan knew what he meant, Darius's church. "Yes, we have time" he assured Richie. The young man smiled. Duncan gave the directions to the driver. Duncan started to exit the taxi with Richie but a hand stopped him.

"No, Mac. Can I go alone? I won't be long" Duncan looked at him searchingly.

"You sure?"

"Yes"

"Okay, I'll be here"

"I know, Thanks, Mac." Richie said smiling and leaving the highlander in the taxi. Richie had always liked this place and had been sad when the ancient immortal had been killed, but he knew Duncan's grief had been immense. Richie still felt the old immortals presence here and was comforted by it. He felt compelled to approach the alter with the wall of lighted candles. He lit two candles one for Darius and another for Tessa. "I'm okay, now, Tessa. Mac is too" his hand trembled a little as he lit her candle, "I miss you" He needed to do something else, now. Sean had given him something to read while still at the chateau and the author escaped his memory, but the words lived on. ". . . How shall I lose the sin, yet keep the sense, and love the offender, yet detest the offense . . . for heart so touched, so pierced, so lost is mine. There is such a soul regains its peaceful state, How often must it love, how often hate. How often hope, despair, resent, regret, conceal, disdain, Do all things but forget. . ."

Richie knew he had to forgive Logan, '...love the offender, yet detest the offense...' Richie crossed himself, memories of church with Tessa and Mac and his times in the orphanage with Sister Mary Catharine showing him the proper Catholic way came to mind and he smiled. The prayer began silently in his head at first, but he thought to himself he should hear this part out loud, if for anything as an affirmation to himself to move on. ". . .And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us, And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil . . ." he finished the rest in silence rising to his feet from his kneeling position. When he exited the church, Duncan stood in the courtyard and looked to Richie with anxious eyes.

"You okay?" he said studying the young man.

"Yeah, I am" he said his voice uplifted. He felt he had turned the corner and he had. Duncan smiled and walked to him and put an arm around him, pulling him to his side briefly.

"Ready to go?"

"You bet, Mac"

Richie turned only once at the gate and looked back at the church. Duncan didn't know what had happened in there, but Richie seemed to benefit from it. Duncan saw Richie into the waiting taxi and spared a glance at the old church as well, and smiled, filled with warm memories. Duncan knew Richie was out of the darkness now. The plane lifted off the ground leaving Paris far below and Duncan looked over at Richie, headphones on and his head bobbing to whatever he was listening to. Duncan smiled to himself he was happy to be returning to Seacouver, but he realized in that moment of watching the young man next to him, that Richie was home to him, and where ever he was, was home. He smiled to himself, opened a book and settled in for the long flight.

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End  
file.